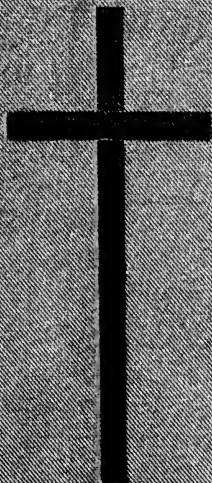


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THE
THREE HOURS' AGONY



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The Three Hours' Agony of our Blessed Redeemer:

BEING

ADDRESSES IN THE FORM OF MEDITATIONS,

DELIVERED IN

ST. ALBAN'S CHURCH, MANCHESTER,

ON GOOD FRIDAY, 1877.

BY

REV. W. J. KNOX-LITTLE, M.A.,

RECTOR.

SECOND EDITION.

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PREFACE

THE following Addresses are published from a shorthand report taken down *verbatim* at the time. They appear, therefore, just as they were uttered. They are published by request, and it is thought better to leave them exactly in their original form.

In all doctrinal statements involved in them, the author trusts that there is no deviation from the revealed faith; and desires to submit them unreservedly to the mind of the Catholic Church, as manifested in the testimony of the Church of England. He prays God that, of His mercy, they may be helpful, in some small measure, in drawing labouring, longing souls nearer to the boundless love of Jesus, our Redeemer.

ALL GLORY BE TO GOD.

ST. ALBAN'S RECTORY,
MANCHESTER,
Easter, 1877.

Order of Service

FOR THE

DEVOTION OF THE THREE HOURS' AGONY.

INTRODUCTORY :

Hymn 100. A. and M.
Address.

FIRST WORD : " Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do."
Meditation and Silence for Prayer.
Hymn 99.

SECOND WORD : " To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."
Meditation and Silence.
Hymn 97.

THIRD WORD : " Behold thy Son. . . . Behold thy Mother."
Meditation and Silence.
Hymn 98.

FOURTH WORD : " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken ME?"
Meditation and Silence.
Hymn 102.

FIFTH WORD : " I thirst."
Meditation and Silence.
Hymn 96.

SIXTH WORD : " It is finished."
Meditation and Silence.
Hymn 103.

SEVENTH WORD : " Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."
Meditation and Silence.
Hymn 91.

CONCLUSION :

Address.
Hymn 101.
Benediction.

Jesus only, Jesus always, All for Jesus.



INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

THERE are, my dear friends, three distinct ways, at least, in which it is possible for us to view the Passion of our Master. We may study the Passion of Jesus first of all as a great historical fact. We may look at it in the bearing it has had on the political events of the civilised world, and the influence it exercised over the Jews at the time in their relation to the empire of Rome. And, indeed, there is no doubt that the Passion of our Blessed Redeemer is of the very first rank of importance as a matter of history.

Or we may look at it, passing from that, simply in its doctrinal aspect. The Passion of the Lord Jesus is a perfect fund of doctrinal truth. It is there that are collected together some of the most mysterious and some of the most powerful of the doctrinal revelations of the Will and Character of God.

Now the Church of Jesus Christ has always laid great stress upon the one aspect and the other. The aspect of doctrine is of course of importance ; for to read what the Passion means, and to throw it into accurate statement—that is to say, to state it doctrinally—is really one of the fundamental necessities of Christian thought, if we are to hold the faith.

But there is another aspect. It is possible to view the Passion of our Blessed Lord from a *devotional* point of view—as in itself furnishing the subject matter of an important Devotion. Now viewing anything in this way, as a *devotion*, is altogether distinct from the other two methods which I have put before you. When we talk of *devotion* we mean a concentrated energy of will and thought and affection, not upon any particular work so much as upon a person ; not upon any particular scheme of operations so much as upon a character and a life. Life is summed up in death. As a man lives, so he dies. As a man is, so are his last hours for the most part. As Jesus was in His pre-existent eternity and in His earthly life, so He was in the last days of His Passion.

Well, now, this morning we are going to contemplate the Passion from a purely *devotional* point of view ; we are going, that is to say, to gaze at it as an historical fact, as a truth of revelation, of such a character that it may kindle, draw, excite, and brace

our feelings, our affections, our will, our thoughts, and concentrate them all in a fruitful manner for His glory (whether it be the glory of being worshipped by His creatures, or His glory by our being drawn nearer to Him) upon the person of that one wonderful Character upon whom your and my hopes depend in time and in eternity.

The Passion of Jesus is a great Drama. It begins, in the narrow sense of the word, with the Agony in the Garden ; it ends with the last cry on the Cross, or the burial in the Sepulchre. It has various stages ; scene after scene ; act after act ; working out just the one central thought of the redemption of mankind. But in that Drama there is one part, one crisis, one catastrophe upon which all the rest turns ; and that part, that crisis, that catastrophe is to be found in the three hours of the exceeding Agony of our Lord in the throes of His mysterious and awful Death. You and I, dear brother and sister, are going to try this morning to gaze simply at that crisis in the Drama. Now what have I to ask you to do in order to gaze with profit ?

I. First of all, you will require *effort*. Devotion is no dreaming ; devotion is no sentimentalism ; devotion means the effort of the will, of the mind, of the heart concentrated upon an object upon

which it is more or less difficult to concentrate the soul because that object is invisible.

You will need *effort*. If there be anyone in the congregation this morning who does not mean to make the effort, to throw himself or herself upon the person of Jesus of Nazareth, then better be away than mock your Redeemer in the most solemn crisis of His awful Death. You must exert yourselves.

II. Another necessity in the Devotion is this—you must not only exert yourselves to gaze at the figure of Jesus, but you must *take the Devotion as a whole*.

Recollect the Devotion is not merely meditation upon what I may speak to you ; the Devotion does not consist in the thoughts that may go through my words to your hearts ; that is only a part : the Devotion consists in the lifting up of the heart, the will, the affection, the thought, to one special part of the Passion of our Redeemer. You must do that in singing your hymns ; you must do that in listening to my words ; you must do that in joining in silent prayer. Take, then, the Devotion *as a whole*, and remember what you are here for is not to amuse yourselves with listening to what I may say to you ; but you are here to gather up all the capacities that your Creator has given you, and to fling them with abject adoration at the feet of your crucified Lord. Now I charge you,

exert yourselves. I charge you throw yourselves into every part of the Devotion. If there be one service in the Christian Church that it is horrible to think of the Christian desecrating, it is the service of the meditation upon the Agony of Him who was the hope of us all. Effort, and taking it in all as a whole—these are necessary. And,

III. From time to time you must remember to exert yourselves on this point. You and I must get away now out of Manchester ; we must go away out of this church ; we must leave the thought of our own personalities ; must forget altogether who I am and who you may be. I am a voice and nothing more ; and you and I must try, by the power of the Divine Spirit—who will help us if we have come calling for His help—we must try to speed away across all the chasms that separate us, if we are really to devote ourselves to the Passion of the Lord.

My friends, the chasms are two. You must bridge them both. There is a chasm of space ; and there is a chasm of time. You must get out of our nineteenth century ; you must go back to the Judæa of the first age ; you must cross the time that intervenes between what seems such a long way off, and yet, in the measurement of eternity, is so very near to us. You must wing your way across the silent and solemn spaces

of the world ; you must go to Calvary ; you must not stir one step from Calvary during our Devotion ; but with all the power of exertion that God may give you, you must try and stand, or kneel, or lie, before the Cross, forgetting time and space as God forgets them ; and if you do that, then there will emerge to your soul such messages as our Redeemer means for you ; and there will rise up to Him the fruit of His Passion—some glory from the love of your souls.

FIRST WORD.

“FATHER, FORGIVE THEM ; FOR THEY KNOW NOT
WHAT THEY DO.”

WE stand now before the cross of Calvary. Our Blessed Lord has passed through all the preliminary acts of the Passion, and in the early spring morning they have reached the hill-top, if hill-top it be, where Jesus is allowed to stand, or sit, in the cold and cutting wind of the opening day, and wait shivering and shelterless, worn with fasting, and already deluged with blood, where He is allowed, I say, quietly to wait to be crucified. The Cross is laid upon the ground. The Cross ! that sharpest instrument of Roman cruelty. The Cross is a bed of torture that is made of two beams, a long one and a transverse beam—a hard couch to lie upon ; and the King of Glory, when He has watched them spread it upon the ground and make it ready, advances, led along by the executioners, and is laid down upon His back. At either end of the transverse beam, and at the foot of the longer beam there kneels an executioner, and seizing a hand each, and seizing the feet—which are probably put together one upon another—they place

against the tender hands, they place against the writhing feet, a nail ; and, driving each home with blow after blow of the mallet, He lies there fastened tightly to the Cross, bleeding and quivering as He is with pain—to that Cross, O Blessed Jesus, which henceforth is to be the sign of Christendom. He lies there crucified !

The moment of crucifixion is a moment of intense agony. The moment of crucifixion was the time for a scream or a cry of anguish that might be wrung from the heart of a strong man. The moment of crucifixion was the consummation of the most brutal punishment, and a cry does arise from Jesus as He lies there crucified ; a cry that pierces further than a shriek of pain ; a cry that goes up to the Throne of Heaven—"Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do."

What is it, Blessed Jesus, that Thy cry meaneth ? It is the voice of the great High Priest, standing by the Altar, offering the Sacrifice ; it is the moment of the Intercession to which all intercessions have looked before and since. O Lord Jesus, Priest and Victim, that cry gathers up all our prayers for one another into one prayer that is ringing still in the ears and echoing ever in the heart of God—the Intercession of the Great Intercessor—the offering of the Great Sacrifice—the pleading also of tender

pity—not only “Father, forgive them,” but “they know not what they do.”

We look for a moment at the executioners. Do *they* know it? Ah, they know in one sense that here before them is lying a Prophet. Here the poor, thin, worn Galilean, the other day with crowds around Him, shouting in His praise—they know that *He* is lying there nailed to the Cross; they know that *they* appear to have conquered; they know that their enemy is being slain; they know that what they call “the great Impostor” is overthrown; but, after all, they know not; and so He pleads for mercy; for sin is ignorance; sin veils the soul, Blessed Jesus, Thou hast revealed to us. Thou tellest us in that cry of intercession that the wound of sin enters into the understanding; that when the mortal sin has been committed, and the sinner goes with jaunty air to kneel and nail Thee to the Cross, he knows not what he does, for the heart is blinded as the heart is hard. O my Jesus, too often have we done that; too often have we committed mortal sin; too often knowing, indeed, that it was wrong, but not knowing what it did to Thee we have nailed Thee to the Cross, and crucified Thee afresh. Cry, O Master, this morning for us; cry for our pardon; cry for and with us; cry that the Father may forgive us, because we did not know what we were doing. We

did not know in that fierce anger ; we did not know in that wild passion ; we did not know in that deep dishonesty ; we did not know in that impure motive that we were taking part in the murder of God which was shown to us in Thy crucified form. Pray for us, Blessed Jesus, that He may forgive us because we sinned in ignorance.

Is there anything more in the cry of Jesus than the cry of Intercession ? Yea, my Jesus, there is an exhibition not of sin only, but of Thy Love, not of Thy Love only, but of my duty. If I kneel before Thee now, O crucified Redeemer, as Thou openest Thy white lips and prayest in these words, Thou bringest to me the everlasting Love of God. The length and breadth and depth and height of the Love of Jesus, who can tell it ? Others would have cursed ; others would have swooned or screamed ; others would have reviled ; others would have cried out against injustice ; but the Love that forgot self, the Love that forgot pain, the Love that forgot injury, breathed out of the heart of Jesus—"Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do." Blessed Jesus, Thou revealest Thy Love ; I cannot measure it ; I only hear it. It is for me Thou revealest also my duty ; that is for me. Shall I be hard and unforgiving ? Shall I have fierce tempers, cross words, implacable animosities, coldness and deadness towards others, want of sympathy, hard

judgments? O my Jesus, when I am tempted, bring me before Thee in the moment of the Great Intercession, and teach me that if I am to be forgiven, I, too, must forgive. And so, Beloved Lord, kneeling by Thee, we thank Thee that the Intercession has gone up, that our prayers can be heard, that our sins can be pardoned. And oh, if any sin has hurt Thee, we would now resign it to Thee, and adore Thee because of Thy everlasting Love.

SECOND WORD.

“TO-DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.”

THE work of crucifixion is accomplished, but the crosses have to be raised up from the ground. They are raised up; the Cross of the Lord Jesus in the midst, and on either side one of the thieves. They are fixed down in the deep holes that are made to contain them each respectively; and almost while they are fixed, the crowd begin to mock and to jeer at Him who “saved others,” but Himself He could not “save.” The ring of watchers is standing back from the Cross; the mockers are passing close by Him; and amongst these there are two who themselves are in agony—“likewise also the thieves railed upon Him.” They both spoke to the Lord. But let us fix our eyes for a moment on one and watch his face. He has lifted his eyes to the Face of Jesus, and no sooner do those eyes meet that Face than a change is passing over the man. There is rising up within the soul a divine faith that springs up responsive to the look of Jesus our Redeemer. There is welling up the

strength of divine grace, raising the poor weak man to the higher level of a spiritual life ; there is clearing within him the power of vision ; the heart, by the glance of Jesus, is being purified that he may see God. And as he gazes at Jesus and faith rises, at last the lips speak. It is a speech of humble prayer. Humility, Lord Jesus, is the foundation of the Love that Thou didst show to us, and Thou teachest it to us all. With a humble cry he turns to Thee, not to receive glory ; not to have a kingdom ; not to sit upon a throne beside Thee ; not to come in clouds of splendour when Thou comest with Thine own. The humble soul does not ask that ; there is one joy for it ; one joy at least of which it hopes it may be worthy—"Lord, *remember* me." The trial to the loving heart is to be forgotten ; to be forgotten by those we love, Lord Jesus, is hard. And so Thy creature calls to Thee, O God, not to be forgotten ; not all forgotten. All unworthy, seared with sin, robed in the darkness of corruption, he who has railed at Thee one moment ago, now is turning towards Thee. He does not think that he can be with 'Thee ; no, but only not to be forgotten. What was it, blessed Lord, that flashed upon him ? Oh, it was the splendour of a noble life ; more, it was the splendour of the Love of God. What is there in the world, my Saviour,

like Thy splendour? What is there like Thy Love? Earthly friends pass and fail; earthly hopes die down; but oh, at least may we be worthy not to be forgotten. "Lord, remember me."

Blessed Jesus, Thy face has turned towards him; Thou art looking steadily at the man that prayed; for never yet was cry of prayer, never yet was yearning of soul; never yet, even from a sinner plunged in sin, arose one sigh of longing that did not find its echo in Thy Sacred Heart; never yet did voice call to Thee and not find ready response. Thou turnest to him and Thou answerest as God answers. For Thou art God. What is this character that comes out in Thy words, my Jesus? Oh, blessed joy! He saw it in the realms of glory. In vision, caught up into an unearthly splendour, he saw that character, and we hear it now—"I am faithful and true; the faithful and true Witness; the Beginning, the Head of the creation of God. Verily I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." O Lord, the pangs of crucifixion are sharp and burning; O Lord, the woes of a dying heart are heavy and deep, but through the heart, through the form of him who in spirit knelt beside Thee, in the midst of his agony, there is gone a thrill of joy, for Thou hast given him that for which

alone we need to long. What greater joy, Blessed Jesus, than to be with Thee ?—

With Thee, dear Lord, when life is weary,
With Thee, dear Lord, when sin is bad ;
With Thee, dear Lord, when all seems dreary,
With Thee, dear Lord, when death is sad.

In life, in death, in all our sorrow,
In morn or night, from year to year,
Only from Thy dear Heart to borrow
Some help, some strength to draw us near.

Without Thee, my Jesus, what is life but one long exile? an exile where we speak the language of a foreign clime instead of our dear native tongue. To be *with Thee* ! We should not fear death, we should not fear sin, if only we could hear Thee say, “ Verily thou shalt be with Me.” And, Lord, we shall be with Thee, if we look to Thee as he looked ; if with all our being surrendered to Thee, the trifles of life despised, the murmurs of the crowd, the blasphemies of the throng, the indignant insults of the traitors round Thee—if these are contemned, and only with raised face, and humble heart, and crying soul, even from the depth of our sin we cry, “ Remember me ;” then there comes, sweet and clear, the dear voice of Thy Passion, “ Verily thou shalt be with Me.”

“For ever with the Lord !”
Amen ; so let it be ;
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.

What was it, Lord ? Oh, was it not Thy generous love ? The generosity of Jesus ! Meditate, my brothers ; meditate, my sisters, for your own souls, upon the *generosity* of Jesus. He keeps up no grudge against you—others may have grudges—not He ; no, He forgives and forgets ; forgets and puts behind Him in His Precious Blood all your coldness, and deadness, and hardness. He forgiveth all. Oh, raise your hearts and love Him, and ask Him to *remember* you. Blessed Jesus, oh that we may love Thee so that we may long to be remembered ! We have forgotten Thee. We forgot Thee when we were young and passion was strong ; we forgot Thee when we were old and the world was valuable ; we forgot Thee in society when affectations came upon us ; we forgot Thee in social circles—we made ourselves the centre, not Thee, dear Lord. We have forgotten Thee in life, but oh, we will not forget Thee now ; for in death we dare not forget Thee. Lord, remember us ! up

there in glory ; down here in church ! Oh, Mighty Presence, Everlasting Lord, remember each and all, with all our sorrows, all our sins, and all our cares. Only not to be forgotten ! Lord, remember me ! And Thy love is generous, and we will love Thee :—

For mercies past, for sins forgiven,
For grace of God, for hopes of heaven,
O Lord, to Thee shall praise be given,
Who givest all.

How much have we had that we *called our own* ?
How do we forget amidst blessings that *Thou* givest all ? Oh forgotten, persecuted Jesus, be near us and help us to remember Thee with Thy large and generous Love !

To be with Him in Paradise. The hour is coming, Lord, when we must hope to be with Thee. Oh, call us now to remember Thee ; and this day, this hour, this moment, let our hearts be filled with Thy love, and answer back, my Jesus, generously. Give us grace to give Thee what Thou hast given to us—love for love. If not before, then now one act of contrition. If we have forgotten, now we will remember. Jesus, receive our too late memories, and do not forget us when Thou comest in Thy

kingdom. O Lord Jesus, pierce us with Thy look ; make us to have faith ; rise within us ; pour Thy grace upon us and help us then to have that joy that this Thy servant had, that we may be nailed to the Cross and never feel the pain ; that we may take the Cross and bear it, if Thou willest ; or lie down upon it to suffer on it ; but oh ! while we suffer, whether it be in throes of sorrow, or sickness, or loss ; whether it be in trials, forgetfulness of friends, or darkness of death, Blessed Jesus, one prayer is our prayer—"Lord, remember me !"



THIRD WORD.

“BEHOLD THY SON BEHOLD THY MOTHER.”

THE crowd around the Cross is falling further back; some, from having satiated their curiosity, returning to the world's work, leaving behind the trifle of “one slave more crucified.” But before the Cross of Jesus there is another group—a group of holy women who have been following and lamenting Him, who have been accompanying Him through all His wanderings; and immediately in front of that group, with pale face and fixed eyes, and steady determination, there “*stands*” the Mother of God. Jesus our Master has performed two offices of the priestly life: He has made the Great Intercession for sinners; He has asked for forgiveness for those who crucified Him. He has turned to the poor outcast—the representative of most of us in this world—first reviling Him, then praying to Him,—and He has stretched out the hand of His High Priesthood and absolved him. There remains a duty for the Lord to perform. There are other relationships of life besides these that He has already dealt with. Oh, not

only with mankind in their evil aspect of unrepented sin ; not only with mankind in their diviner aspect of real sorrow ; but also with mankind in the inner happiness of their own quiet lives, Jesus comes with the message of His Passion. Thou hast been stripping Thyself, dear Lord, of all things. They stripped Thee of Thy garments ; they are stripping Thee, for a time, of Thy Sacred Body. Thou didst strip Thyself of the support of many friends ; and now Thou art going to strip from off Thee one remaining earthly comfort that had solaced Thee in many sorrows, and shared with Thee so many joys. There was to be a fresh agony for the heart of Jesus. Jesus and Mary and John were gazing each at the other, and to each there was a special agony ; from each a special message. Thine agony, dear Lord, was the memory, the old memory, of home. Thou seest before Thee her who had "borne and nursed the Eternal Son." Thy memory goes back to the old days at the house at Nazareth, to the old times when there was glad converse between the Eternal Word and the Mother of God. Many an evening had there been that sweet converse ; many a time didst Thou, too, talk of holy things, and Mary's mind had been illumined with the thought that came out of Thine everlasting glory ; many a time had she pressed Thee to her bosom, and folded Thee to rest at night, and leaned over Thee to

kiss Thy brow and bless Thee, as a mother may bless her son, even though that Son be God ; many a time, in every little office of love and tenderness, had she gazed on those eyes before, but never with such concentrated agony—the agony of all the concentrated memories of a life that was gone. Dear Lord Jesus, we, too, have memories ; we, too, go back over long years of joy, and sorrow, and loss ; we, too, Thy sinful creatures, look at old homes and past days—days of blessing not known enough when in their fulness ; days of bright memories that have long faded into the damp darkness of death ! Pale faces come across the grave to us, and as we look we seem to hang upon a cross and gaze through the gloom ! Oh, Jesus, “the heart knoweth its own heaviness.” But there is One that meets us. Thou speakest to Thy blessed Mother with the power of human sympathy. Is any sunk in sorrow ? there is Jesus crucified. Is any saddened in memory ? there is Jesus crucified. Is any sorrowing for the loss of friends ? there is Jesus crucified. That torn heart, that anguished mind ! With eyes not stained with tears—for He would not allow Himself the very luxury of sorrow—but with all the agony of a heart that breaks—breaks in the memory of a joy that is gone—He gazed at Mary, and Mary met His eyes. Dear Mother, Mother of God, what was it that was concentrated in thy look

of agony? Oh, thou knewest the glory of thy Son ; thou knewest *some* of the glory. He had taught thee year by year the meaning of His higher graces by that highest sermon of His own most heavenly example ; thou hadst listened to His glorious words ; thou hadst seen His holy deeds ; and night by night, as He lay down and laid His head against thy knee, and in the quiet evening hours of Nazareth thou didst run thy fingers over that golden hair, and gaze across over the quiet evening scene, there rose up words of wisdom to thy mind, and Jesus taught thee of a heavenly home ; and now it is over ! Thou knewest how delicate, how sensitive, how holy was *that* life ; and thou hadst to see Him with that Body once so lovingly tended now one writhing mass of agony ; thou hadst to gaze at Him with that delicate mind hurt by the blasphemies of the filthy crowd ; and gathered up into thy eyes were all a mother's sorrows who gazeth at the anguish of a most glorious Son.

Oh, the Christian's home is consecrated by *this* Passion ! Lord Jesus, what has that home been ? Has it been a home of love ? Has it been a home where childlike obedience has been met by parental tenderness ? Have the children remembered to obey the parents ? Have the parents remembered not to provoke the children ? Has it been a home of love,

where eye meets eye with all the tenderness and love of those who are united in the bonds of God? or has it been a ruined home, a home of pride, of coldness, of disdain, of quarrelsome words, of angry tempers, of cruel trials, of unspeakable sorrows; a home where children have forgotten duty, or where parents have been untender? Blessed Jesus, sanctify by Thy Passion the gifts and blessings that belong to the Christian's home!

Jesus and Mary are gazing eye to eye, eye to eye, with the love of the best of sons and the love of the best of mothers. O that we, my Jesus, may have our homes holy; that our children may lie in *Thine* arms; that our little ones may lisp *Thy* Name; that they may grow up in Thy Love! Thou wilt to lose her Thou lovest above all. O unselfish Love of Jesus that parteth with this great gift for love of us! And yet, dear Lord, Thou didst not forget the anguish of *her* heart. O the anguish of a mother's heart who can tell? But who is to tell the anguish of the Mother whose Son was the Son of God? Mary *stood*—for Mary was the Mother of God—she did not swoon, nor cry, nor faint, nor scream; she *stood* with calm, majestic agony. The deepest suffering is the calmest. And as she stood and gazed, that Love that was larger than her love, as infinity is larger than the finite—as the heavens stretch beyond the earth—

as God is greater than the creature—that wide Love of Thine, dear Lord, stretched down with all its force and tenderness to seek for one to care for her in those sad days. But, Lord Jesus, Thou didst love us, so Thou wouldst not call her “Mother ;” Thou wouldst speak as if Thou wert the child of all humanity ; Thou wouldst not make distinctions there, to teach us how Thou lovest us. “ *Woman*, broken-hearted mother, My mother,” He seems to say. You who have sorrows, you who have trials in your home ; you who have sickness, or separation, or loneliness, look up to Jesus. He will not forget thee then in thy passion.

II. “Behold thy Mother.” There was another act that Jesus had to do. My Lord, what was it ? There is one great love that Thou dost give Thy creatures—the *love of friendship*. To be a friend, to have a friend, what is it ? It is to have the holiest thing that earth can have, that God can give. A friend is faithful ; a friend feels without being told to feel. A friend pities, bears, believes ; a friend will never leave ; a friend is helpful in life, strong in death, never mistrustful, always self-forgetting. Jesus sanctified friendship in His Passion. O my brother, I come away from Calvary ; I come down here into Manchester. I turn from my Lord, and turn to you. Have you

known the blessedness of friendship? How have you bound its bonds together? Have they been bound by the tie of the love of Jesus? No tie will last but that; others fail; others snap. But if you are to love your friend as man should love his fellow, it must be in the love of Jesus Christ our God. John was His friend. He had "lain breast to breast with God;" and at that last moment, when he was to be left alone, He gave him in self-denying love—the most blessed gift that Jesus had to give—He gave him the Mother that He had loved best of all in all this world. "Behold thy Mother." What was it, Blessed Jesus, that Thou hadst done?—emptied Thyself; emptied Thyself of glory; emptied Thyself of the relief of human feeling in praying for others; emptied Thyself of animosity against those who cursed Thee, in Thine absolution to the stranger; emptied Thyself of the large sympathy of the near presence of her who had been all in all to Thee in those old days of that old and holy home. Why didst Thou empty Thyself? For love of me! Blessed Jesus, and have I taken objects of desire and made them more than Thee? O teach Thy children if they have loved or wife, or child, or brother, or sister, or father, or mother more than Thee, how all unworthy! And we have grudged Thee these when Thou hast taken them from us,

grudged and been almost angry. And we have taken idols and placed them before *Thee*; folded them in our arms, and held them to our breasts as if we could never lose them. O Love of Jesus, teach us to love all *in Thee*. If we have loved anything without Thee, show us Thine unselfish tenderness.

“Behold thy son; behold thy Mother.” “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” Up there in glory, Lord, Thou livest; up there in glory she is Thine. Thou callest her “Mother” evermore; Thy highest creature there Thou salutest as the “Mother of God.” And we remember when our hearts are torn; we remember when the grave has hidden away our friends; we remember when we strive to make Thee first of all, and not these earthly joys that Thou hast given us, we remember that up there in glory Thou hast that human love that feels for all our longings—“Behold thy son, behold thy Mother.”

Dear Lord Jesus, Son of Humanity, Friend and Brother, teach us to choose Thee first, and then all in Thee. O teach us that if we come to Thee we must be *like* Thee; that if we come to Thee and are not ready to put away father or mother, or wife, or child, yea and our own life also, we cannot be Thy disciples. “Jesus only; Jesus always; all for Jesus;”

one aspiration, one longing ! My God, for that we
yearn, and although we cannot carry it out in our
weakness *perfectly*, yet will not the true desire bring
us a grace that will help us to love Thee supremely,
and to deny ourselves in loving others only in Thee ?
“Behold thy son ; behold thy Mother.”

FOURTH WORD.

“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”

THE hours go on, and the scene in the Passion is changing. There is a change in the city below Calvary ; and there is a change around the Cross. In the city, people are moving about their work, as day advances ; the priests are going up, as usual, to the Temple courts. Those who are engaged in preparing for the great sacrifice are gathering round the precincts of the Temple for the great act of the great day. There is movement in the city. Men are at their work, at the practice of their religion, at their private duties at home. They are startled by a change. It is the bright noon-day of the Eastern clime, and suddenly over the city there is stealing slowly, steadily, a curtain of gloom like the curtain of night. Men start and find they cannot see their way in the streets ; so huddling up together in groups they cannot look one another in the face. Work is stopped. There is a horror of great darkness coming over. They gaze at the sky, but there is nothing to be seen but the curtains of midnight spread out over

the heavens. Slowly across the doomed city is stretching the cloud of the wrath of God, for God is crucified.

And it is so about the Cross. The Mother of Jesus has been led away. The beloved Disciple has taken her from the scene of sorrow "to his own home." The centurion is watching Jesus. There are one or two standing by, but there is no sound of mockery, no sound of blasphemy, no rush of the crowd ; one by one they are stealing silently away down the hillside, across the valley, up through the ravine into the city. The darkness, the horror of darkness is creeping over them ; there is stillness about the Cross.

The hours go on : moment after moment the beats of time are counted off ; and as they go, stillness is around the Cross, except that drop by drop the Precious Blood, the Ransom of humanity, the Life-Blood of God, is falling on the ground from all the wounds on hands and feet and head. From the Sacred Wounds of Jesus is pouring out the Blood ; and that only sound is heard around the Cross as the darkness gathers thick as midnight ; the darkness that hides the final struggle of God with evil.

It is the centre of the battle. The forces are gathering up. What are men ? David asks on those hills of Bethlehem, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him ?" And Jesus answers, for around

him are gathering hosts, not of men, but of demons. It is their hour and the power of darkness. And this is *for man* ! O brother man, stay for a moment, gaze through the darkness ; spiritual vision can pierce the gloom ; gaze and read in that horror of darkness thy dignity. The Captain of Salvation is entering the thick of the contest, and entering he answers—“What is man ?” says the Prophet. The Great High Priest gives answer, “Man is My child, man is immortal.”

From out the darkness there comes a voice. It is like the still small voice that spoke at Horeb ; it is like the whispers that come in silent hours from God. It is not a shriek for mercy ; it is not a scream of pain. The poor body is one mass of loaded, bleeding agony. The poor heart is breaking ; but there comes a cry through the darkness, quiet and yet of compressed unearthly anguish—“My God, My God, why hast *Thou* forsaken Me ?” My Jesus, what is it that Thou speakest of ; and why dost Thou speak ? Is that the voice of God ? It is the voice of the Incarnate, One with God from everlasting, “God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God.” Could it be that the Eternal Son should ever be parted ? Could the hypostatic union between Man and God ever be severed ? Could the union of grace in that Humanity, poured full without measure of the Spirit of

God, ever be disunited ? Could that bond of glory which He had from the first, and shall have for ever in His eternal beatitude, ever be snapped asunder ? O no, my Jesus, no ! God everlasting, God eternal, God all glorious, God full of grace, there is no separation. But this is the voice of the Incarnate God, God made Man. There is one separation, there is the separation of Thy soul from the consciousness of the protective Love, the providential care of God. O wonderful Love of Jesus ! as man Thy faith never flagged ; it is “ *My God, My God.*” Speaking as man, not one drop of suffering is denied ; it is “ *My God, My God, Thou hast forsaken me.*” What is it, Jesus, in Thy sympathy, what in Thy redemption, what in Thy revelation that speaks to me in these words ? In Thy sympathy ? my Redeemer, Thy creatures are lonely. Sometimes they have no friends to help them ; sometimes the world is cold and hard ; sometimes they feel themselves isolated ; sometimes there is no one near to support. As was He, so are we in this world. O lonely Jesus ! O forsaken One ! forgive us if, forsaken, we have complained. Why these complaints ? Canst Thou pardon them ? Yea, my Jesus, for Thou Thyself hast cried, “ *Why hast Thou forsaken Me ?*” But O Lord, how often have we been oppressed with a sense of loneliness ! How often are we impatient because our prayers are

cold ! How often are we impatient because we cannot see Thy face ! The darkness is around Thee, and Thou dost not see Thy Father's face. Thou wert lonely. Well, my Lord, then let us take our loneliness. Thou wert forsaken, why should we repine ? It is the sympathy of Jesus that utters the cry. The Incarnate Jesus feels for you. O brother, sister, as you listen to His cry, remember that never cry of loneliness, never thought of desolation, never complaint of coldness in prayer, of want of realisation of the Love of God went up from you, but found its echo in the Heart of God.

Dear Lord, teach me ; it is more than sympathy ; yea, it revealed to me the *character of God*. God chastises. But why dost Thou chastise, my God ? "Because I *love* Thee." "The Lord chasteneth those whom He loveth ;" "He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth ;" and if we have trial, sorrow, sickness, death, if God is hidden away, what does it mean ? O, by that cry of dereliction ; O, by that agony of loneliness, there is still the faith that rises up and says in quiet trustfulness, "*My God, My God.*" It means that the Love of God is so large, so tender, that it is a Love of chastisement. Blessed Jesus, chastisement is grievous while it is present, Thou hast told us, and it was grievous to Thee.

But what is Thy revelation ? O, at that dark

moment, with the clouds and thick darkness round about Him, Jesus was tasting the agonies—the agonies of Hell, if Hell is separation from our God. To have no God near ! Not to speak to God, not to feel God, not to be able to cry to God ; to have separated myself wilfully from my God ; to have chosen that my being can never rest because I *will* not have its only rest,—O, my God, that is the final awfulness of unrepented sin ! And, O Blessed Jesus, that Thou mightest win for us salvation, and lift us out of that last horror, Thou Thyself wert plunged in the darkness that was the darkness of Divine forsaking, and the darkness of the powers of evil storming Thy soul.

Wilt Thou be with us, blessed Lord, in moments of temptation, when round us come the forces of the invisible foe ?—when voices speak from Hell ; when they ask us to give *Thee* up ; when we are asked to choose one pleasure, one passion, one self-interest, one moment of laziness, instead of the hard way of sorrows and the hard bed of the Cross.

O my Jesus, when around us there is the gloom of that darkness, and near us there is the voice of the demon, let us hear Thee crying through Thy forsakenness, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?”

What shall we do for Jesus ? Forsaken for me,

my Lord, I will never forsake Thee. Give me grace that if others forsake Thee, not I. Give me grace that because Thou didst shut up the light of Thy Divinity and left Thyself in loneliness and darkness, and a horror of death, so may I, my Lord, ever be with Thee, stand *by* Thee, speak *for* Thee, witness *to* Thee, refuse the world's enticements, refuse the Devil's whispers, fight like a brave soldier, conquer like a stern conqueror. O Conqueror of Evil, O Lord of Glory, by that forsaken moment help us all to fight as Thou didst fight for us, and allowed Thyself to be *alone* in Thy struggle.

Jesus in His forsakenness reveals His sympathy. Jesus in His forsakenness reveals to us the meaning of loneliness, the meaning of chastisement. Jesus in His forsakenness tells us the Love of God in sorrow. Jesus in His forsakenness has quenched the flames of sin that would rise up and burn with power of Hell; forsaken that *we* may not be forsaken. O Blessed Jesus, we will stand by Thee as Thou hast stood by us.

And on this Thy Death-Day, O Redeemer, now glorious and yet present—on this Thy Death-Day revive our energies, enliven our minds, quicken our understandings, kindle our affections. Watching with Thee one hour, may we go on to watch with Thee, and stand by Thee to the end. Help us to witness

to Thee, Blessed Jesus, and not to forsake Thee.
Help us with faith ever to look to Thee.

Jesus, Master, King of Glory,
Still to Thee we turn for life,
Master, when the battle's sorest,
O sustain us in the strife !

Let us kneel and think of the horror of darkness,—
what it would be to be forsaken of God. Let us
kneel and think of the tenderness of Jesus, how He
has saved us from that last dereliction.

Now know I, Lord, by force of strong persuasion,
No power on earth below, in Heaven above,
Ever can part me by its fierce invasion,
Conqueror of Evil, from Thy lasting Love.

FIFTH WORD.

“I THIRST.”

THE crisis, the great crisis of the Agony passed over with the cry of dereliction. The night clouds that had been hanging over the city and over Calvary began to break ; the darkness was not so dense. There was a movement about the Cross ; men ventured to stir ; they dared to breathe again. And then from the Cross there came a human cry of exceeding suffering, the cry of a poor human nature parched and burned with the fire of crucifixion—“I thirst !” What was it ? What is it that we read in this teaching of the Great Teacher from His Chair of Truth ? O the Lord Jesus had been indeed exercising the office of the Priest ; He had been absolving and interceding. He had exercised the office of Humanity ; He had been throwing himself into sympathy with our affections. He had exercised the office of Revealer in sympathy with our sorrows, with our loneliness, and with our sufferings under the scourging of God ; and now, those great offices so far perfected, He hangs before us in the anguish and

the majesty of His Passion, a *very Man of men*, to feel with us in all the poor sorrows of this lower world.

I. The cry of our Lord was first a cry of physical pain. Meditate upon the sympathy of Jesus in physical pain. Pain is the deepest thing, O Lord, we know of in this life. Pain belongs to us all. Pain at any moment may come ; pain may come in great intensity ; pain must be ours before all is over. And to know that our God can feel not for the sufferings of the mind only, but for the pangs of the body, this is to know that the Greatest meets the least ; that the Highest bends to the lowest ; that God loves man. We know the pangs of thirst, the pangs of fever. Meditate, my brothers and sisters for a moment upon any memory you have—such memories rise before us—of these pangs of fever. You remember the lone long nights when you sat by what seemed the dying bed ; you remember when through the darkness you have tried to look at the face that is flushed, but not with the flush of health ; you remember how every sobbing breath that came went to your heart, as it seemed as though it must be the last. You remember that oft-depicted picture—actual to some of us, a memory that never fades—how, when the hours have gone by, the night is in thick darkness, the soul feel-

ing as though God had forsaken it. At length the morning comes ; the streaks of eastern dawn are in the sky ; the poor sleeper tosses and turns ; the fevered cheek is still fevered, but there is a motion as of life ; the colour goes, the face becomes ghastly, the breath is coming in sobs, the brow is damp. We kneel down and place our hands upon it, and we say to ourselves quietly, because the pain is too deep for anything but quietness, "the end is coming." And then we cry to God that this is too heavy, that *this* at least we *cannot* bear. The poor sleeper turns, the face flushes again ; this time it is not fever, it is the faint flush of the relaxing hold of the fierce enemy. The eyes open ; our hearts spring up into our eyes to meet the wakening glance of love ; the lips are parted, the tongue speaks, we cry almost in anguish, "It is not death !" The voice strikes us once more with just a human longing—"I thirst !" "I'm very thirsty !"

How deep, how full of world's thought and affection are the commonest needs of man ! Jesus had that longing, and there was no one by Him to put a hand upon His head ; there was no one by Him to turn the Body ; there was no one by Him to rejoice in the look of reviving life ; there was no one by Him to be glad that the clouds were sweeping away, to be glad that the morning was coming. His Mother?—He had sent her from Him because He willed to taste it *all*.

His very Father's face had been shrouded ; His poor body was weak and faint. " I thirst," He said, thirst with the fever, thirst with the racking pain.

O my Jesus, Thou hadst none to help Thee, and Thou teachest us again Thy large sympathy, that Thou wouldst enter into the pangs of the body as well as into the pangs of the mind.

II. Is there anything more from out the heart of Jesus that pours itself forth in those words ? They came in quivering agony ; they came with a yearning longing of a body that is burning with pain ; but they came from a soul that yearned with an almost quenchless longing.

There is the Sacred *Soul* of Jesus still not parted from the Sacred Body. Meditate upon *the thirst of the Soul*. Jesus required drink for His parched lips. They gave Him vinegar, but He did not touch it ; He could not drink ; He would not have any solace. Kneel before the cross on Calvary and look up and see that thirsting Soul.

Have you ever had—for I leave Calvary, and speak to *you* for a moment—have you ever had a yearning so strong that you did not know how to satisfy it—a yearning for some dear friend far away, a yearning for one long dead, a yearning for one you have loved who is worse than dead, dead to God,

dead to high thoughts, dead to holy desires, drifting along a sea of ruin—have you yearned for such? If you have, then you know a faint image of the yearning of your God. And if you have, O bless His Holy Name that by that yearning, *yet* there is hope, that they who have loved Him once, having loved Him, will at last return. It was the Priestly yearning of the Soul of the great High Priest. That Priestly Soul of Jesus could have no thirst quenched except it be quenched with the tears that come from my soul and from yours. The thirst of God is quenched by penitence; the thirst of God is quenched by persevering love. O quench His thirst! “I am thirsty,” He cries across the ages, cries across the spaces of long distant countries, cries across the chasms of the rolling seas of time; the cry comes out of the Heart, the living Heart of the Creator, from the voice of the one Mediator,—“My child, I cannot live without thee.” “My child, you can choose My Love; O choose it, for I am thirsting. I long to have you know My blessedness; I long to have you see My Glory; I long to have you enter into sweet communion with your Father; I long to have you make this world one bright wide waste of sunlight, a rolling sea of blessedness bathed in the Love of God. Won’t you come? Won’t you be Mine? Won’t you love Me? As I hang and agonise and

cry with pain, the Blood flows, the Body is burst asunder, a poor riven mass of breathing wretchedness, and this the Body of your God ! And you go by and wag the head ; you go by and slake your thirst with pleasure ; you go by and slake your thirst with self-interest ; you go by and slake your thirst with untruth ; you go by and slake your thirst with coldness, indifference, worldliness, deadness, hardness, want of prayer, excitement, lust, frivolity, gain ; slake the thirst of the immortal with that which perisheth in the using !”

O no, my Jesus. Cry from out Thy Glory, cry to Thy children ; soften their hearts, touch their souls, bend their wills. “I thirst,” saith Jesus. “Master,” we answer, “we will slake Thy thirst.” O Lord Jesus, we too are thirsty. We are in a world of sorrow, and we are under clouds of gloom. The enemy is attacking us more and more ; but we are thirsty. We cannot find anything to slake that thirst unless it is slaked in the Bosom of God. He made thee for Himself, my brother ; thou canst not rest without Him. He made thee for Himself ; He is not satisfied unless thou givest thyself to Him. O remember the image of the prophet who tells us of the clay and the potter’s wheel.

Ay, note that potter's wheel,
 That metaphor, and feel
 Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
 Thou, to whom fools propound,
 When the wine makes its round,
 Since life fleets, all is change : the Past gone, seize To-day !

What though the earlier grooves
 Which ran the laughing loves
 Around thy base no longer pause and press ?
 What though, about thy rim,
 Scull-things in order grim
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress ?

Look not thou down but up !
 To uses of a cup,
 The festal board, lamp's flash, and trumpet peal,
 The new wine's foaming flow,
 The Master's lips aglow !
 Thou, Heaven's consummate cup, what need'st *thou* with earth's
 wheel ?

Fool ! All that is at all
 Lasts ever, past recall :
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure :
 What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be :
 Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid the dance
 Of plastic circumstance,
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest .
 Machinery just meant
 To give thy soul its bent,
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

For thou wert made—Jesus says it who made everything—made to quench His thirst, made to satisfy His yearning : all trial of sorrow, all change, all circumstances of life are moulding thee for that. O thirsting Jesus, with penitential hearts and lowly minds, we will renounce our dream of wicked pleasure ; we will renounce our thoughts of evil gain ; we will renounce our longing for the world's praise ; we will pour from this cup framed for Thee, from our heart we will pour penitence and love—ah ! how unworthy—into Thy Bosom : then Jesus, we will slake Thy thirst. O the revelation of the thirst of God ! O the revelation of the Love of Jesus ! Give Him what He needs and longs for, my brother, my sister, give Him yourself. *Jesus only ; Jesus always ; all for Jesus.* . Gaze on His Agony ; listen to the cry of His fever ; rise up and give Him what it is He yearns for—give Him your own soul for time, for eternitv. Life for Life Love for Love.

SIXTH WORD.

“IT IS FINISHED.”

THE closing scene of the Lord's life is before us ; the agonising hours of the Agony are passing away. We come to the last scene in the mediatorial battle, when, raising His head, the Lord, with outstretched body, extending His hands as a Priest in offering the Sacrifice, utters the final sacrificial words, “It is finished.” What is finished? Prophecy is finished. Jesus looked back over long ages of prophecy ; seer after seer had gazed through the dimness of the future—gazed with his blind eyes, blind with tears and longing. Nations had yearned ; creation had been crying out from the pit of moral corruption ; civilisation had been looking forth for the great Fact of the whole world. Jesus cried from the darkness “It is finished.” *Prophecy is finished.*

Truth is finished. “For this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the Truth. Whosoever is of the Truth heareth My voice.” A great Revelation has come, “once for all delivered to the saints,” watched over, guarded, believed, kept, that

at last when the final ending comes they may have the joy of having "kept the faith." Truth is finished in the deposit of Revelation, though yet to develop and extend by the action of the Spirit of God.

Truth is finished.

Example is finished. Life is learned not from lessons in *words*; life is learned from lessons *by example*. The Example is finished. There is none higher. The streams will not rise above their source. Man cannot rise above that Man who is the source of his being. The finished Example, the perfect Character, the union of tenderness and strength, crowned by perseverance, *that* is finished. He has "persevered to the end," and "it is finished!" O beautiful Picture, O perfect Model, O marvellous Example! Do I look into the world and see what we call sorrows? Do I look into orderly life and admire the man that asserts himself and fights his own way in the world? My Jesus, in the very closing hour of Thine Agony, looking up to Thy poor broken body, looking up to Thy darkened eyes, I see *the Example finished*.

My brothers and sisters, let us look for a moment to Jesus and remember what that teaching is. It teaches us what is true humanity—not the indulged self, not the loud and furious passion, not the gratified greed, not the jaunty air of the pleasure seeker, not the careless indifference of the trifler, who goes

gamboling through eternity as though he were a clown or a buffoon—nay, dancing like a poor moth, like a mere mote in the sunbeam, and he, in fact, a king and an immortal!—not that creature wrapped in vanity, forgetting his end, is the example for you and me to follow. No, the world *has* held up its examples, but we have none like the lacerated Christ—self-conquest, self-control, persevering labour, persevering love—that is humanity in glory. Not the throne of splendour, not the home of ease, but the crucified Jesus, persevering even to the end, is *the finished Example*.

“It is finished.” The battle is finished; finished in power at least. Are we to win the battle, Blessed Jesus? Is ours to be a final conquest? Shall these poor hearts subdue the flesh, and overcome Satan, and resist the allurements of the world,—a wild and wandering “world?” Shall it be so? Blessed Jesus, from out the darkness of Thy crucifixion there comes the cry, “It is finished.” *The power of victory is finished*. He joined issue with the enemy; around Him came the demons rushing from Hell on one side and the other, darkening the light, piercing through that gloom. He overcame them by the power of His Blood, by the testimony of His obedience. The victory is won—“It is finished”—won in power. Won in power that it may be won in

act ; for what else is finished ? The Church is finished. The Body of Jesus is built up ; sanctifying grace is collected to unite all those who are scattered, that the underlying stream may flow even amidst the outer rents, that the Church of Jesus may be finished in her power to work for souls.

The Church's one Foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new Creation
By Water and the Word ;
From Heaven He came and sought her,
To be His holy Bride,
With His own Blood He bought her,
And for her life He died—

And when we gaze at Jesus on the Cross, there in that spectacle, that cry, that high-priestly offering—the Church is built up.

“ It is finished.” For why, my Jesus ? O *the Mystery is finished* ; Redemption is finished ; the possession is bought back ; the sin-laden soul redeemed. No more need of darkness ; no more need of guilt ; no more “ fearful looking-for of judgment.” Looking unto Jesus—“ It is finished.” The high priest at the altar spreads his hands above the victim ; the High Priest on Calvary stretches the hands, and says the great Consecration Prayer of finished Oblation. Before the Throne of Glory, up

into the incense of that Heaven where angels are adoring, before the Face of the Father, before the generations of a ruined world, before aching hearts and sin-laden lives, the great High Priest has made the Offering. My brother, you and I are saved—saved by Jesus ! Unless we tear ourselves away, the Offering is offered ; the Great Sacrifice is finished ; Redemption is done !

Blessed Jesus, one more thing was finished, and we are thankful that it is so. *Thy sufferings were drawing to an end.* O poor torn body ! O thorn-crowned head ! O pierced and bleeding hands ! O breaking heart, the end is coming. Thy proclamation of Thy finished work comes before the closing of Thy life, for Thou hast never thought one moment of Thyself.

My brothers, my sisters, we turn to Jesus and we see the story. “ I have a work for you to do,” He says, “ are you doing it ?” When you come to the last stage, shall you cry—“ It is finished.” He has given you children to train, or husband or wife to help, or brother or sister to guide, or friend to cherish, or the unruly to restrain, or the evil to convert, or souls to build up and help nearer to God. Are you doing it ? “ Work your work while it is called to-day ; the night is coming when no man can work.” The night will come and then the cry go forth—O shall it go

forth ?—" It is finished." Yea, by the power of that sorrow ; yea, by that suffering of our most dear Redeemer ; yea, by that noble Example ; yea, by that everlasting Sacrifice offered once and for ever on Calvary, perpetually presented on the Altar of Glory in Heaven, and on the altars of His Church on earth ; yea, by that everlasting Redemption He will give us grace—for He is loving—if we ask Him, that our work may be done.

O ruined lives that do not work for Jesus !
O breaking hearts, that break but not for God ;
We seek and strive, alas ! for what may please us,
We smart, not bend for healing 'neath the rod.

Blessed Jesus, inflame our affections, illuminate the understanding, show the magnificence of the work of Thy creature, and help us to that crowning grace which shone in Thee above all grace. Jesus had strength, Jesus had tenderness, Jesus fought, and Jesus conquered, because He "*persevered to the end.*" Where the Captain goes, the soldier may follow. "Whosoever taketh not up his Cross, and followeth after Me, cannot be My disciple." "Whosoever persevereth unto the end the same shall be saved."

SEVENTH WORD.

“INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT.”

THE Priestly work was done, but not the Human work. The Priestly work had ended ; the Great Sacrifice was offered ; but there remained the last act of Humanity. Jesus the great High Priest absolved the sinner, comforted the saint, offered the Sacrifice, yearned for souls, prayed for the forgiveness of enemies. Jesus, the Man, closes at last the career of sorrow. It is always solemn to stand by the death-bed ; but there is no death-bed so solemn as the Cross. The human soul was to part from the body. The rending of the soul and body asunder is always terrible and mysterious. Faces look calm, but O, who can tell what goes on in that deep inner life, when that long and close embrace is at last relaxed, and the soul is torn from the body where it dwelt ? We cannot tell, for we have not yet known. The dead are gone , they do not come again. Pale faces look from out the dark, but the lips do not speak to us and tell us of that mystery. But there is one voice that rings across the

grave with the voice of power and love, and yet most certainly the voice of One who tasted death—the very voice that said that day at Calvary, “Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.”

Jesus is *in sympathy with us in death*. It is the revelation of that last sympathy. O Lord, we follow friends to the edge of the grave, we smooth their pillows, we try to cool their burning brow, we hold their hands; the Church comes and says her Offices and gives them Sacraments to help them through the darkness of the grave, and we stand by, or kneel and pray, and our hot tears are poured on the cold hand, and the voice that once spoke, the hand that clasped ours, the eyes that looked with all the energy of love—these are still! We cannot go with them; they cannot stand with us. *One* has passed through death who can and will stand by us. Dear Lord, we will love, this afternoon, Thee whom we shall need at last, at last! O Lord Jesus, we bless Thee that Thou hast passed through the portals of death, because we are dying creatures; we must die. The mystery of the sympathy of the Death of Jesus is the mystery of His exceeding Love. Let us ask Him that He will be with us in our last moments. Let us beseech Him by the memory of that cry which spoke the pain of the last wrench of death, the confidence of the last gaze of faith, that we may not be alone.

When the last dark storm is gathering,
And our hearts are swept with fear,
By the Love of Thy dear Passion,
Jesus let us feel Thee near.

The mystery of the Death of Jesus is the mystery of *human sympathy*.

Meditate upon it as a mystery of *resignation to the Will of God*. It is the recognition of the Rule of Life. My Jesus, Thy Rule of Life was the will of God ; the Passion of Thy heart was His glory ; and the recognition of the Holy Will to guide the Life, that was the teaching of Thy Death. It was the resignation to that rule. The Sacrifice was offered, but the Obedience was to be perfected ; and the perfecting of Obedience is by the power of Love ; and the power of Love is the only power that is strong as death, and mightier than the grave. He perfected His resignation because He perfected His Love.

O Will of God, O awful, severe, terrible, unflinching Will of God, how often have I shuddered as I lay beneath that rod ! And yet when I am afraid of the Will of God, I look up in the face of the dying Christ, and there is *resignation*. Have you hesitated to give up your will to God, my brothers and sisters ? Have you hesitated to give up those you love to Him when He demanded ? Have you hesitated to surrender pleasure, or to surrender social position, or the intoxi-

cation of applause? Have you hesitated to surrender the place that you are in, or to surrender the duty that you had loved? Have you hesitated in anything that God demanded? What was the cure for your hesitation? What was it by which you learnt that you must obey? The dying Jesus. "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit." It is a *revelation of resignation to the Will of God*. Meditate on that.

It is more. It is the revelation certainly of the largest confidence, for it is also a revelation of that which is of the highest value. O Jesus, what is the highest value? Sometimes we think our poor bodies; sometimes we think our miserable names; sometimes we think our place or calling. But Thy voice, even in death, is like Thy voice in life—"What shall it profit, what shall it profit if a man gain the whole world and lose his own *soul*?" "Into Thy hands I commend *My soul*." The *soul* is the highest. What is the last act of confidence?—to give the soul, the life, the self, all it has; all it has acquired, all that is written upon it by the experience of life; all that is gained by the conquest of temptation; all its hopes, its fears, its longings; to lay it in the hand of God. That is the last confidence. O Great, Dear God, Father of us all, Thou whose creative Hand has made, Thou who hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour, to reveal in life. in death—for in Godhead He is One with

Thee—Thou who hast sent the Blessed Spirit to apply the Merits of the adorable Redeemer; O Father of us all, “Our Father,” by right of that dear title, in life, in death, we have our Brother Jesus, Brother and God; and He is by us and with us, pleading for us, offering the Offering that we may be saved; showing us His Example; extending His tender pity; and in the last moments bringing to us the strength of that calm confidence by which the Christian lays him down to die.

Death is awful, for death is the entrance to a world unknown. Death is fearful, for death is the leaving of much we love. Death is glorious, for death is the opening of an immortality of splendour. Death is blessed, for death is to be with Christ in God.

Shall we not trust Him, as He has so loved us? O doubting heart! O darkened mind! O wavering will! O failing flesh! rise up and stretch the hands through the night of ages, across the chasms of time, not far, but near; not there, but here. Jesus is before thee in the resignation of His dying, and He says, “My child, My own loved child, death is coming to thee, but I will be with thee.” Yes, death is coming,—

Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set; but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death.

Death is coming. We have seen it pass over the young and beautiful, who we fondly thought would live so long ; we have seen it pass over those whose lives were rich in blessing, with souls so full of power, so full of loveliness, that we could not think so sweet a thing was to die. Death is the last defeat, and O how terrible ! Death is before us for those we love ; for us, dear brothers and sisters, too, death is there, but beyond a deathless life of glory.

It is not Time that flies,
'Tis we, 'tis we are flying ;
It is not Life that dies,
'Tis we, 'tis we are dying.
Time and Eternity are one ;
Time is Eternity begun ;
Our Life can know no dying.

Death comes, but it is not that last dying, for by the resignation of the Passion, by the last Agony on the Cross, we can appeal to Him who is Man of men and God of Glory. O Jesus, ever be with us, and carry us, for we will trust Thee, through the darkness of death.

Shall we trust Him ? We have meditated upon His Passion ; we have been looking for an hour or two at our dying Lord. O let us kneel down and tell Him that all we want is only this, that we may die

daily ; die more and more to self, live more and more to God.

Death will come one day to me,
Jesu, cast me not from Thee.
Dying, let me still abide
In Thy heart and wounded side.

Dear brothers and sisters, with the last dying cry of Jesus we close the Agony. Let us kneel and adore Him for the bitterness of His Passion ; let us remember the awfulness of that last ending ; let us pray Him to prepare us for it by dying daily with our dying but living Lord.

CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

WE have endeavoured now, my dear brothers and sisters, to meditate on the hours of the Agony. We have come to the end, to our Lord's death. What shall be the end *to us*? What was it that made the Cross to Jesus so specially awful?

I. You may answer that first plainly, you look at it as being awful because of *physical suffering*; and it is true. There was a burning thirst; there were the cramped limbs; there was the agonising fever; there was the frightful strain; there was the aching head; there was the breaking heartstrings. The physical anguish of the body, hanging projected from merely the pierced and bleeding hands and feet, must have been unspeakable torture. Other martyrs have died deaths, some have said, as bad; and the unbelieving world, that has never cared for the shadows of Calvary, says—"Why speak so of the sufferings of the Lord, when other men, His followers, suffered more?" Why? For this reason; first, that the sufferings, the physical sufferings, of Jesus are beyond any physical

sufferings that ever have been endured, because of the power of the hypostatic Union. The incarnate life received a touch of infinity. And when we speak as though the sufferings of Jesus could be measured, when we speak as though it were an exaggeration to dwell upon them as being so awful, we have forgotten the great central truth of the Catholic faith—"He was made Man;" He took upon Him our flesh; being Incarnate God, being man, true man, He received that power of suffering that made it infinite.

II. The second sorrow of the Passion was *the mental anguish*. We look at the Crucifixion as an exhibition of frightful sorrow of mind. It is true. No sufferings of the body can ever touch sufferings of the mind. The sufferings of Jesus have exhausted the meditation of the saints from that age till now, and they will exhaust our meditations, I suppose, throughout a long Eternity—God willing, with God's assistance—a long eternity of thanksgiving. The sufferings of Jesus were depths of mental horror that no one can tell; but those depths of mental horror revealed a truth, and that truth was this,—it may be stated in different ways :—

1. They revealed first, *the horror of sin*; that the moment God came under the conditions of creaturely life, that moment His sinful creatures flew upon Him

to murder Him. They reveal that fact, that sin is the rising of the passion of the creature against the very life of his Creator. Sin is an object of faith. You and I can never know how terrible sin is until we meditate truly on the Passion.

2. The sufferings of Jesus, the mental sufferings, reveal to us also the *depths of Divine tenderness*. The mystery of Atonement we cannot tell, we cannot fathom. We are children waiting until our education is completed ; and the Father says, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." We are pilgrims, with our faces towards the morning, marching on, across the dark desert of life ; but we begin to see the brightness of the waves of Eternity, and, as we look towards them, we hear the voice which says—"When you cross that ocean you shall know all."

Atonement is an unspeakable mystery. But, unspeakable though it is, it reveals to us—because it tells us plainly—this *fact*, that to conquer sin *God required to die*. It reveals to us the further, the blessed fact that God loves us ; with a passionate tenderness it tells us that the love of God has a length and breadth, and depth and height that no tongue can tell, no heart has dreamed.

III. It reveals to us this: It shows to us, as I have

said to you before, the highest picture of humanity—the ideal of humanity as an object of faith. We may mistake a hero for being the greatest until we have spiritual vision enough to understand a saint. But if we want to see what humanity is at its best it is not as the High Priest in the Temple ; it is not even in the Great Teacher preaching the Sermon on the Mount ; it is not in the quiet home of Nazareth ; it is in that final struggle of persevering tenderness, in the midst of a perfect torrent of anguish that it is useless to talk about, for no tongue can tell it. We see in *that*, self-denial, self-forgetfulness, glorifying of man, obedience and resignation to God, we see the primal manhood, we see the Man of men. And then we adore.

We adore. Do we? We *ought* to adore, and we ought to meditate. Will you? O my brothers and sisters, what shall you *do* for Jesus who *died* for you? What if He went through much agony that you cannot fathom, what if your poor cold heart cannot reach unto it at all, O you can kneel and gaze at the crucifix. What should you do? Be with Him much *to-day* as a practical duty ; keep near the Cross throughout this day of His Passion. Do not go to the giddy world. Be near Him much *in life* ; it will never make your life gloomy, but it will teach you that the life of an immortal is indeed a dread solem-

nity. Be near Him *in hours of loneliness*: He will stand by you. Be near Him *in moments of prayer*.

IV. Remember that the Cross was a *throne* as well as a picture. It was not only the Altar of Sacrifice, the picture of a splendid Manhood, but it was the Throne of Judgment. On the cross He judged sin and He condemned it. My brother, when your passion rises, when your desire for gain, when your untruthfulness, your failure of virtue, your fatal laziness wound the energies of your living soul, go and stand before the Throne of Judgment, and hear the cry of anguish that condemns your sin. But O, when you do it, kneel before the Altar of Sacrifice. See there the Victim, Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, and know that however black your sin, however deep your degradation, when the true and penitent heart comes to Jesus, the hands that are raised in absolution, the hands that are raised in benediction, "are the powers of the world to come" from the crucified hands on Calvary, and you may be forgiven.

Remember that it is the Throne of Judgment.

V. And remember that it is one thing more.

He sits upon another Judgment Throne in clouds of glory. The Criminal of Jerusalem there will sit where

the judge sat ; the judge of the Prætorium will be in the dock as though he were a criminal ; and you and I shall see him. We who are assembled here this afternoon, and who have knelt at Calvary, will certainly—as certainly, at least, as that we are here within this church of God, so certainly shall we stand before the final Judgment and gaze upon our Lord. If we are *in* Christ, O what blessedness, for that Judgment will be the opening of those endless uses of blessing when the unimagined wonders of immortal life shall break upon the soul in all their splendour, as that soul is gazing eye to eye with God. Remember it. Live in the power of the Passion ; live in the thought of the end. Then your life will be fruitful ; then it will be one long benediction. They that are around you will arise and call you blessed ; and He will stretch His bleeding hands and say to you, “At last, My child, is My work ended ;” so will yours ; and when it does, there remaineth the “well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Oh Jesu, grant it, grant it by Thy mercy ; grant it by Thy Passion ! Let us never forget Thee, but ever cling to Thee, and at last, when Thy “servant shall serve Thee,” my Jesus, my Redeemer, may *we* be there. My brothers and sisters, we *shall*, if only we *believe* what He tells us and *do* it. He says from the

Cross of Calvary, "I am able to save;" "*able to save.*" Do you believe it? are you living by it? are you doubting the word of Him who sealed His testimony by the Blood of His anguish?

Before you leave this church this evening, O let us kneel and make one resolve against some one sin, one desire for some one virtue, and one great act of love to Him from whom comes all the love of all true friends, all the beautiful things of all this life, all the comforts in the darkness of our sorrow; and when other things are dying down, at last from Him there comes "the hope of glory." So may you live for Him. Make your resolution against sin and for virtue, and pray Him that that act of love may ring throughout your being, making your dark days bright, your dreary days glad, gilding over the gloom of life, supporting you by its brightness in the darkness of death, rich foretaste of that everlasting predilection that shall well up from our hearts when at last we meet Him.

So when all at last is over,
And we rest with Thee above,
We may swell Thy heart's rejoicings
With the rapture of our love.



H Y M N S.

THE POWER OF THE PASSION OF JESUS.

1 S. JOHN iv. 19.

O SACRED Head of Jesus,
Encircled with the thorn !
O Sacred Heart of Jesus,
By sharpest anguish torn !
The shades of death came o'er Thee,
Thy body writhed in pain ;
Yet Heaven and Earth adore Thee,
A King, for aye to reign.

My Lord, shall not I love Thee,
Who gave Thy life for me ;
The world may tower above Thee,
But Thou art all to me.
As in Thy bitter Passion
I read my hopes above,
I'll pay Thee in like fashion,
And give Thee Love for Love.

O Sufferer, in Thy suffering
I see my ransom paid,
O Jesu, that great offering
For love of *me* was made.
My Lord, my Life, my Treasure,
Thou Conqu'ror in the strife,
I'll pay Thee in like measure,
And give Thee Life for Life.

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE.

Bristol, Holy Cross Day, 1871.

THE SORROW OF THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS.

LAM. i. 12.

I SAW Thy pale face flushed with shame,
With shame Thy meek head bowed,
When rude hands bared Thy sacred frame
Before a staring crowd.

I saw the rough nails pierce each vein,
With blows that would not spare ;
I heard Thy pity conquer pain,
Thy dear voice rise in prayer.

Dear face, once nestling close and warm
Against Thy Mother's breast ;
Dear hands, she folded safe from harm
When rocking Thee to rest.

May she not help Thee now, is none
Who has the will and power,
Must hearts burst, seeing Thee alone
In this Thine anguished hour ?

Ah ! Lord, and in this grief of Thine,
I, too, must share the blame,
Rude thoughts, and coward deeds of mine,
To Thee are pain and shame.

Let me not leave Thee, having loved
Or thought or deed of ill ;
The world may scoff and scorn, dear Lord,
May I kneel by Thee still !

Oh ! be it mine to share Thy pain,
Bravely to take Thy part ;
What Thou hast given to give again,
And love Thee heart to heart.*

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE.

*The Quirinal, Rome,
Good Friday, 1873.*

LASTING LOVE.

JOHN XV. 14.

MY Lord, how easy 'tis to say !
But oh ! how hard to do ;
Easy to choose the narrow way,
But hard to journey through.

Easy at times to kiss the Cross,
Then let it fall, and fly ;
To cry " Hosannah " loud to-day—
To-morrow, " Crucify."

The very world must stand and gaze
At Thy dread trial scene,
Must pay its scanty meed of praise
At Thy majestic mien.

But oh ! that I could *love* Thee, Lord,
With will that would not bend ;
Obey and do *Thy* will, dear Lord,
And be Thy real *friend*.

Not with suns shining in my heavens,
And skies without a cloud,
But when the raging floods are out,
And winds are roaring loud ;

Not in the rapt'rous hours of prayer,
And in the Passion-tide,
When I *must* hear Thy dying cry,
And see Thy streaming side ;

But when the quiet cares of life
My thoughts and fancies fill ;
Then keep Thine image in my soul,
And let me love Thee still.

Lord, print Thy nail-marks on my hands,
Thy dear face on my heart ;
Bind me to Thee by love's strong bands,
Nor life, nor death can part.

Oh ! give me grace in every place,
In all things good or ill,
To see the city far away,
To see the lonely hill ;

To see the vision of the Cross,
And Thy worn form to see ;
And hear Thy voice thrill through my heart,
“ My child, 'twas all for thee.”

Oh ! changeless Jesus, best beloved,
Grant that my love may be
Changeless as Thine in deed and word,
Time and Eternity.

So help me, Lord, with firm resolve,
To do and not to say,
And for Thy sake to work my work,
While it is called “ To-day.”

And when the night comes on, the night
Of death, the dreaded tomb,
Be Thy dear face in vision bright
Seen in my deepest gloom.

So let me lie me down to die,
Sure, in my mortal pain,
That my first waking glance on high
Shall meet Thy glance again.

With pardon sealed, the past forgiven,
The fret of battle o'er,
And love so perfected in love,
That it can change no more.

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE.

*Rome, April 8,
Tuesday in Holy Week, 1873.*

THE SOURCE OF HOPE.

A BATTLE PRAYER.

1 TIM. i. 1.

JESUS, Master, King of Glory,
 Still to Thee we turn for life ;
 Conqu'ror when the Battle's sorest,
 O sustain us in the strife.

When the world is hard upon us,
 And we flinch before its scorn,
 Let us learn an earnest purpose,
 From Thy forehead pierced with thorn.
 Jesus, Master, &c.

When the Flesh is strong, and round us
 All its poisonous vapours roll,
 By Thy lacerated Body,
 Dear Redeemer, save the soul.
 Jesus, Master, &c.

When the Fiend with subtlest temptings
 Lures us to our endless loss,
 Mighty Master, strike the strong one
 With the sharpness of Thy Cross.
 Jesus, Master, &c.

When the last dark storm is gathering,
 And our hearts are swept with fear,
 By the love of Thy dear Passion,
 Master, let us feel Thee near.
 Jesus, Master, &c.

So when all at last is ended,
 And the Rest is reached above,
 May we swell Thy Heart's rejoicings
 With the rapture of our love.
 Jesus, Master, &c.

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE.

*Turweston Rectory, Buckinghamshire,
 Holy Cross Day, 1873.*

EASTER JOY.

HAIL ! Living Jesus, pain hath wrought perfection,
Hail ! once I breathed my prayers with doubting breath ;
Hoped, feared, believed ; this Morn of Resurrection
Know I, Immortal Love has conquered Death.

Jesus, I *feared* once, for my bad betraying
Rose up within me by a whispered voice,
“ Dastard ! you heeded not your Saviour’s praying,
“ Chose your Barabbas, cling then to your choice.”

Then, Lord, I heard Thee, e’en in my temptation,
Speak words of strength that moved my soul to shame,
Fixed me more firmly in the soldier’s station,
“ All powers of Hell are conquered by My Name.”

Lord, I *believed* Thee ; ah ! but then the fretting,
Then the oft falling and the weary strife :
Still, still Thou savedest me from false forgetting,
Pointing me onward to Thy Saintly Life.

Saintly ! forgive me, O Divinest Master,
Ah, so Divine : I *hoped* in Thee once more,
Hoped on, that, rescued from Life’s deep disaster,
I yet might meet Thee when the Night was o’er.

Hoped ! ah but Hope e’en fails to stay the fashion,
Changeful for ever, of sin’s potent spell.
Then, Lord, Thou stood’st in anguish of Thy Passion,
Then my heart *loved* Thee, loved and all was well.

Loved ! “ But will love last ? ” thus my soul’s upbraiding
Spoke in the saddened rising of regret ;
“ Dear earthly love fails, passes, all is fading,
“ Jesus is dying and the Dead forget.”

Hail ! *Living* Jesus, pain hath wrought perfection,
Hail ! once I breathed my prayers with doubting breath,
Hoped, feared, believed ; this Morn of Resurrection
Know I, Immortal Love has conquered Death.

Now know I, Lord, with force of strong persuasion,
No power on Earth below, in Heaven above,
Ever can part me by its fierce invasion,
Conqueror of Evil, from Thy lasting Love.

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE.

Easter, 1877.







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